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Part (Americans)

O'Neil, G.

NB1



**THE COBBLER IN WILLOW STREET**  
**AND OTHER POEMS**



THE COBBLER IN WILLOW  
STREET :: AND OTHER POEMS

BY GEORGE O'NEIL

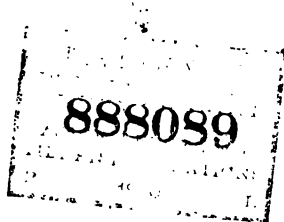


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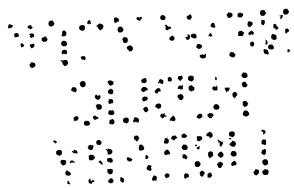
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## ON THE LIGHT REEDS

*I cannot find the truth that men have told,  
But only know the beauty of a song;  
And nothing truer than the white sea-foam  
Feathering where the gold beach-grass is long;*

*Or truer than a high complacent pine  
Pointed to stars upon a lifted hill;  
Or any eloquence of harmony  
Telling as much as when a wind falls still.*

*Men with their speech have made an unreal  
world;  
For I have watched the flight of aimless birds,  
Feeling the truth of it within my heart  
Dispelled . . . when I have sought to give it  
words.*





## INTRODUCTION

*I know nothing*, says the author of the poems in this book, *truer than a song*

. . . . *Or truer than a high complacent pine  
Pointed to stars upon a lifted hill. . . .*

Such words perhaps are in themselves the most challenging introduction that can be spoken in his behalf to the world. It is because of his concern with the old, always beautiful, always truthful things that this very young man gives back to lovers of poetry something that they have missed in the drift of modern poetical achievement, which, whatever its other virtues, has lost the natural and wild hue of the inspiration that flamed, for instance, in the spirit of Keats when he said,

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever.*

The poetry of living, of human experience, the poetry visited by one's own moods upon sordid places and unlovely events,—this poetry has its own truth because the human soul must

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prevail, and in order to do so, must make for itself visions and illusions. The scientific impulse of our age has driven us deep and far in our search for the truth beyond truth,—for beauty after beauty has seemed to cease. And we have found it, now and then, and been thrilled by the realization. Again we have concerned ourselves with the poetry dwelling lightly in artifices, and in the casual aspects of things often unnoticed. . . . One might say that a great deal of our excellent and accomplished contemporary verse represents the poetry of *ennui*, of sophisticated and nervous living, and yet not be unaware that much of it glorifies, or at least catalogues, the more exquisite and imperishable phenomena of beauty; but if I am dwelling, seemingly to no purpose, upon an insinuation of the lack of a higher inspiration in the mass of modern poetry, it is not to disparage it because I am recommending something that has given me a greater pleasure; it is because I know how vital and engaging, and how “interesting” the poetry of to-day really is; and how, this being true, the modern reader addicted to its flavor may find a little tasteless this draught of pure spring-water. . . . What has a poet whom

Fame had never signaled, whom Life had never taught or tortured, and whom Love had never broken when he played his light reeds at the age of twenty,—what has this poet, so unconcerned with the world, to say to the world?—To a world in which the recent war has been like a funeral in the house? He only says that he knows nothing truer than a song,—or beauty, the beauty that is truth; and of this beauty he shares many rare perceptions; he makes many shining statements. . . . Reading his poems is like walking in a garden. Or, perhaps, like opening a box of flowers in a land in which there are no gardens or no flowering seasons.

I, for one, think and the few people who have seen these poems in manuscript have agreed, that there is something strangely moving about the happiest of them, something tear-compelling. Why this should be so, I do not know, for one of the wonders of this slight collection is that there is no conscious melancholy in it, none of youth's morbid and dark thoughts; and, too, the poet betrays a perfect unconcern of his own emotions; very seldom is he personal; always his is the composed statement of the artist,—never the disconcerted and

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disconcerting struggle merely of a personality recording itself. There is great maturity in the sheer youth of such an accomplishment. To find such ease and sensitiveness of expression, such aloofness of thought, and such a richness of vision in the work of a boy of twenty, is sobering to those of us who are given to speculating upon the curious affinity between life and art.

In this poet's work, as I have suggested already, there are few people; once there is a haunting lady, whose beauty and quaintness, touched with affectation, a little,—lead him to associate her with the past; he places her in “apricot and gold brocade,” on “an ivied bench,” in an old French garden, and finds gifts for her; among them, he tells her, are

*Venetian rings to be vivid on your wan  
fingers . . .*

and his entire address to her is a composition of much charm and manner; though it is distinguished by no such exquisite modulations of feeling as characterize the “Petite Naïve,”—a revelation of the sensitive and flower-loving heart of a very young girl in her garden. As a delicate romance, quaint, elusive, fragrant,—

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rich in fancies and even drollery, this is perhaps the most unusual and original poem in the collection. . . . "Original" is a poor adjective to use for poetry, but there is a fresh and breathless quality in this piece, something that all at once amuses and moves and delights one, in a strange fashion for a poem. It is like a little sad comedy of another time; with a heroine so naïve and tender; so courteous and rapturous, that our hearts follow her. There is no garden in all literature more delightful than hers, more vivid. Here there are little straight walks, and white gates; sunflowers that *watch down the road*; a pool with *iris wading at the edge*; and here April brings her violets, —*introspective little things covered up in leaves*,—that are like nuns.

Is there more to be said of this poet's quality? Or is it presumptuous to have said so much when he speaks for himself with such beauty and ease? If so, it is only because there are so many other sounds in the forest of the world,—so many other voices calling in the wilderness of Time, that it seems fitting to urge those who may love his aimless and lovely songs, to listen well for their hesitant beauty, their fugitive glories.

ZOË AKINS.

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## THE COBBLER IN WILLOW STREET





## THE COBBLER IN WILLOW STREET

UNLESS you knew just where to look  
You couldn't find it out of a book,—  
Willow Street . . . close-walled, steep and still,  
Short and shadowed in every nook  
And hour as day goes up the hill.

The dark shapes slant to west at nine  
And creep at one up to a line  
Measuring eastern walls again,  
And close the gloried morning vine  
That they have touched enough to stain.

The cobbler's house is half the height  
That pigeons measure in a flight  
From bottom of the hill to top . . .  
And where his one doorstep is white  
The cobbler sings and keeps his shop.

[1]

Mornings, he makes a bluebird tune  
For dreams and things that go too soon,  
And in a song he's half forgot  
Of Willow Street, in afternoon,  
He sings of people who are not . . .

Of people who no longer care  
About the houses in the square  
Above the street and at its end,  
Or do not see the willow bare  
When rain drips from the boughs and bend.

He hums his quiet song about  
The houses with their shutters out  
Or folded in . . . of men who talked  
Of plans and faith and hope and doubt,  
And those that whispered while they  
walked . . .

Where houses kneel around the church  
The pigeons flutter from their perch  
Down to the narrow spotless street  
To strut and stand and flash and lurch,  
Crowding about the cobbler's feet.

[2]

Some day the cobbler's sound will beat—  
When evening threnody is sweet  
With old bells shaking sprays of chimes—  
A song of us and Willow Street,  
Tapping a heel all out of time. . . .

## SPRING'S CROCUS-FINGERS

PALE finger-tips that tremble through the  
leaves,

That last year's winds have drifted on the  
ground,

Show where the hands of Spring have groped  
and bound

The grassy garlands timid April weaves;  
These soft reminders each smooth lawn receives  
That Summer stirs upon her buried bed,  
And soon will wake and lift her radiant head  
Into the world that waits for her and grieves.

And up her flaming yellow hair will blow  
In hoyden tangled honey-suckle vine;  
Her smooth warm cheek in shaded rose will  
glow;

Her eyes in purple-pointed iris shine;  
Her song will be the rush where rivers flow;  
Her feet will dance where water-lilies twine.

## SONG OF LOVE'S ENDING

LEAVES are falling, leaves are falling,  
Haunting the air with whispered sigh;  
Dead to the voice of winds calling  
Faint and far in the sky.

Summer is slowly fading, failing,—  
Golden-green of her beauty fled;  
Time has sighed, the rose is paling,—  
Some of its glory dead!

Oh, falling leaves and Summer spent!  
What I would change I do not know. . . .  
Death is not sorrow since Love went. . . .  
But if my dreams should go——

## AUGUST

ABOVE the rolling fields, the air  
Shimmers, an amber veil,  
And on the far plain glistens where  
The rigid corn is pale;  
Flames in the russet grasses glare  
Where creeping vines were frail. . . .

Call of the crow and the swallow's flight  
Winged before leaves are shed. . . .  
Cricket's song in the cool-starred night  
Chirped while the moon is red. . . .  
The old despair of summer's plight—  
The haunt of summer dead!

LISTEN . . . I TELL. . . .

How strange!—that underneath this only sky  
Time infinite all men have come and gone  
To leave less memory than winds that die,—  
And never learned the secret of a dawn.

O think!—that all this world with all its ache,  
With all its song and intricate allures,  
Was mine, as real a thing as dreams can  
make,—

This world that now so naturally is yours.

Think of the praying that the stars have  
heard,—

The stars men fancy peaceful entities,  
That in high skies must hear God's whispered  
word!

Yet stars too cast their shadows into seas.

How vain!—though given dreams a thousand  
years,

Of what I dreamt I might not know a  
half . . .

Or see a star left brighter for my tears . . .

Or know a wind left lighter for my laugh. . . .



## FOR THE WOODS DESTROYED

MAN-EPHEMERAL mite-worked blasphemy!  
To violate the beauty that was thine!  
In thy primeval sanctuary he—  
Unheedful of the glory so divine  
That thy uplifted rafters did encrown—  
Let his weak curse of cutting steel ring out  
And sent thy mighty pillars crashing down!  
Such sacrilege! No moment did he doubt  
That thou—for centuries inviolate—  
Had been attended by the Gods to grow,  
Attain thy holy grandeur, and await—  
As lofty culmination—his mean blow.

What sin! Thy moonlit ghost, I sometimes  
think,  
Must come to haunt the sky's high northern  
brink;

And gazing down into the lowland's cup,  
Watch smoke from little huts of men curl up;  
And curve a quiet smile at what disdain  
For mighty Nature man doth entertain!

## SPRING

THE slender fingers of an April rain  
Dispelled the foam of apple blossom snow  
That down the fertile orchard ways had lain  
Since Spring shook out her veils a week  
ago. . . .

Now in the tiny forests of the grass  
Unopened violets are folded down,  
Crushed by their leaves into a purple mass,  
Catching the hour's first sunlight for a  
crown. . . .

Pillars of poplars quiver with the light  
Of gold-brown buds on boughs awakening,  
And swallows cut the clouds in silent  
flight. . . .

Ah, Spring! What is this poignancy you  
bring  
That flashes like a mute storm in the night?  
And gives me pain for every living  
thing . . . ?

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## SHADOWS OF DAWN

### I

UPON a sky of green and silver light  
The patterned loops of faded stars are flung—  
Garlands of day left trailing by the night;  
And high a mist-webbed yellow moon is hung  
Where slowly—gold, a cloud of day is blown  
By slight stirred winds, unraveling its lace;  
And dark against the vividness is thrown  
A rigid boy in silhouetted grace.

Silent, he stands upon a high-curved hill,  
Splendidly poised as from a flight at end,  
Lifting his head into the light, and still,  
Watching the wonder of a dawn descend.

And distant, clear, there is a flute-like  
song—

Curling and strange, and only three notes  
long. . . .

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## II

Three stars are all that linger in the sky,  
Losing their brilliance in the growing glare  
Of gold that shadows where the night went by  
Floating her veils along the misted air;  
Three swallows flutter in a silent tree,  
Starting their song, and with a flash of wing  
Speed from the leaves, and in an ecstasy  
Fly to the fields and tell the lark to sing.  
Mystic and wan beneath the creeping gray  
That crosses slowly on the meadow grass,  
The pool lies waiting where the moods of day  
Will bring it visions as the moments pass . . .  
The youth stands wondering at the wondrous hour . . .  
Three frail leaves flutter from the white-thorn flower. . . .

### III

“O rolling hills, trees in the wind, blue sky,  
If I should never see a spring have birth,  
And never see another swallow fly—  
Telling again the glory of the Earth;  
If I, no more, shall feel the song that wakes  
Within my heart, and like a fountain flows  
Untroubled and high—until its beauty breaks  
Showering mist upon the nearest rose;  
If shadows bring me—and the dark prolong—  
A prayer or dream that is not of the truth,  
Breaking my heart to give it shadow song,  
Then, something does not love!” Thus sings  
the youth.

Clear, quivering, the distant song draws  
near . . .

And there is music that he does not  
hear. . . .

IV

As vivid as the noon in autumn trees  
Where shimmers in the sun the green and gold;  
As light as leaves a wind of autumn frees  
And blows to hollows in the hills to hold;  
Startling and swaying on the sky's curved  
line,

Hesitant, fleeting, as her veils unfurl  
And fall and flutter where the vines entwine,  
The flashing sudden whiteness of a girl  
Comes with the first gold arrow of the dawn;  
And swiftly, laughter ripples in the reeds  
And follows where a breath of wind has  
gone . . .

Strange stillness trembles as the sound re-  
cedes . . .

And something like a storm-blown butter-  
fly

Awakened in a shadow . . . shudders  
by. . . .

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V

Vague sorrow like a shadow bird is born  
Beating its wings within the youth's strange  
heart,

Unreal, raising a phantom song forlorn  
As cries that wake where distant sea-gulls dart.  
He cannot tell if it is joy or grief  
That floods his soul with courage or with fear;  
So stands unstirring as, in bright relief  
Against the clouded leaves, the girl draws  
near.

They are the music that the truth has drawn  
Out of the silence of his muted strings,—  
Two stars undying in the light of dawn  
And theirs the music that the swallow  
sings . . .

So they are silent with the truth of love  
As day's immortal beauty breaks above. . . .



VI

Flooded through leaves, the light is interlaced  
With silver curves upon the wind-carved pool  
Where thin reflections of the reeds are traced,  
And fragments of the sky lie, blue and  
cool. . . .

Wanly, the shadow of the girl is blent,  
And moves as slightly as the water stirs—  
Merging its paleness where the boy is bent,  
Fusing the image of his form with hers,—  
They meet as silence weaves itself with sound;  
And as the moment lives some mystery  
dies. . . .

Two shadows touch . . . the truth of life is  
found;

And shadow dreams awake in shadowed eyes.

Three notes are trembled in an echo far,  
New dawns will wonder at another  
star. . . . .

## PRAYER

O PEACE that is the end of everything!  
When I shall find your shadow on my flame—  
Give me your silence on a day in Spring,  
And I will hush my lips, loving your  
name . . .

Oh, may you come while April is a-bloom,  
With rain for robes and swallows for a crown!  
And sway me sunward in the lilac's plume,  
And flash my laughter where the leaves shake  
down!

O Sleep! to your long dreams and endless  
hours  
Take me within the earth when life is  
there . . .  
And let me have the Spring stars for my  
flowers  
And leave the willow murmuring my prayer!

## THE CYCLE

TOGETHER on the sharp slope of a hill,  
Heeding the distance of the world we stood;  
Only your hair, windlifted, was unstill . . .  
The bird-sounds died away within the wood.

Along the valley dusk swept silver veils,  
Cloaking the tall corn and a hermit tree . . .  
And down another hill through orchard dales  
The last gold melted into mystery . . .

The daylight dwindled to a westward flare . . .  
The star-sparks glittered from the new moon's  
knife . . .

And only the wind that lifted your dark hair  
Expressed the gestures, infinite, of life.

## **YOU ARE NOT HERE THIS APRIL**

**THE buds are starting  
From the slender stems,  
Pale and feathery  
Diadems;**

**The birds are darting  
Where the soft light weaves  
Pale gold tapestry,  
Gold-laced leaves;**

**How you loved April,  
With its sun that creeps . . .  
I remember . . .  
And April weeps . . .**

## LA PETITE NAÏVE

DEAR friend—

At last!

You have come to see my garden.

I am happy; I love it so;

And I hope that you will too,—

That you will see every sweet, smooth petal

I love,

And notice the texture of each rose—

How the light touches them!

See, there are the hollyhocks over there;

Do you like hollyhocks?

They are so prim and quaint.

Mine are nice and tall,—are they not?

Come; we will go to them over this straight  
little walk

And I will pick that budding one for you.

I do not like to break them—

But for you!

Here are the peonies;  
Last week—  
Oh I am sorry you did not come then!  
They were rioting then—  
Superbly flamboyant!  
But now they are dying.  
See the great, streaked, satin leaves dropping;  
I cannot bear it;  
Come . . .

Over here,—the poppies;  
Tissue-silk,  
Painted by timid dawns, I always say.  
I sit near them for hours  
And watch them nod,  
Telling their dreams to the wind.  
The other day one spoke of me . . .

Do you see how the butterflies  
Hover above the pansies?  
I do not know why,  
But they are there always, fluttering in the  
sun;  
Perhaps old loves—winged pansies—  
Do you think?

Now a rite:  
Gaze in my pool;  
It is the sacred spot of my garden,  
For I have let it see dreams in my eyes.  
You may look.

Then, too, stars are there at night.  
I have given it water-lilies to hold;  
And a little frog comes out sometimes,  
And sits always on the same great leaf—  
Really!

I do not like frogs,  
But, this one is whimsical.

These are yellow iris wading at the edge.

I was afraid to plant Narcissus at the pool,—  
Yes, you smile—

But I was afraid;  
So he is there in the grasses  
Under the tall trees,  
Where at sunset  
A thrush sings out its heart;  
I fancy it poor Echo.

Ah, the roses!  
They are beyond the little white gate,

Isolated in their wistful loveliness;  
It swings easily—  
Come in.

Can you feel the haunt in the air?  
I am afraid my roses are growing wan;  
But more magical as summer fades.  
The love of dead June seems to cling to them.  
I do not touch them now,  
For once—

Shall I tell you?  
Once I kissed the reddest rose in my garden,  
And in the morning  
I found all its petals strewn in the path.

April brings her violets—  
Introspective little things that hide in leaves;  
And nuns,—do you ever think of violets as  
nuns?

You must go?  
But if you wait just an hour  
The sunflowers will watch you down the road  
with me.

Do stay!  
Stay until the moon-vine wakens.



You do not like my garden—  
No, I can tell.  
Oh, I am miserable!  
Come and see it again—  
In a month, at night;  
Then under the moonlight it is changed;  
It is magic, and you will love it then.  
Oh, in a month—  
Star clematis—purple, and flame leaves on  
the ground!  
You will love it then—  
Come back!  
Come back!

. . . My hollyhock,  
I broke you;  
And he has thrown you away!  
It is a sin;  
But I am glad you were not the rose.

## THE GARDEN STATUE

THE peacock's cry is like a dirge . . .  
Why must I watch the moon emerge,  
Minute by minute, moving high,  
While fountains fall and peacocks cry?

What is the stillness in the leaves,  
Shaping the dark magnolia sheaves?  
How did this strangeness first awake,  
Startling the swans across the lake . . .?

What is this thing I do not know,  
Mnemosyne as white as snow;  
Why am I sure I would not dare  
To touch thy naked smoothness there?

## LE CYGNE

THROWN by poplars, tapering tall,  
Quivering silver shadows fall,  
Streaming the light in strange festoon  
Over the lacquer-smooth lagoon.

Leaning, a cypress looms, and dark,  
Shelters the balustraded park,  
Drooping its lace to the marble seat  
Where the whispering lovers meet.

Tremulous winds are slightly stirred;  
Faintly the song of a waking bird  
Flutters the listless leaves about,  
Spilling its gold and dying out . . .

Into the disc of the mirrored moon,  
Phantom white on the dark lagoon,  
Drifting slowly . . . drifting on . . .  
Stately, smooth and still—the swan . . .

## **GREEN-GOLD**

**Up on the hills**

**The trees are a torn tapestry against the  
sky.**

**They lift up into the dazzling air**

**And dip in the flood of the sun;**

**Gold-green . . . green-gold . . .**

**They move electrically . . .**

**Glistening lacquer**

**Upon the vivid, depthless blue.**

## BUTTERFLY

ALL the grandeur of the blue sky,—  
With saffron clouds, tinged gold;  
And the wind that sings down from them;  
The straight tall trees—  
Green, and drowned in the sun;  
The warmth that flows over the world—  
The great, hilled, colorful world;  
And against it all the exquisite flight—  
Dipping . . . fluttering . . . floating . . .  
Of a butterfly.

## RENDEZVOUS

(*To G.*)

THE leaves put a frivolous stencil  
Across the moon;

A sudden laugh-note  
Has stolen into the silvery chime of the  
fountain;

There is a quick shower from a vine  
Of fluttered rose petals;

So swiftly you come  
That the dim light following  
Is like a veil at your shoulder  
Floating out . . .

## CLOUD-RIFT

THE sky is gray;  
Autumn broods of coming winter.  
Through the window-glass I watch the rain  
Touch with speculative fingers  
The still waiting leaves  
And drip slowly  
From the tendrils of a smoky willow.

The day is still . . .  
Time seems to meditate . . .

In my heart there is a quivering warmth;  
A tiny glow lights my long gray dreams . . .  
I remember a dear hand  
Conscious of mine.

## PALETTE

A SHEET of blue—  
Blue deeper than the sky;  
A shade that could not be,  
Except upon the surface of waters;  
And in the flowing rush,—  
White waves that foam and fleck,  
Like feathers wafted down and lost.

Tiny diamonds of light—  
Spear-pointed sparks  
In spattered showers from the sun—  
Dance with electric touch  
Upon the peaks of waves.

In solid silhouette  
Against this froth of view  
Three birches waver up  
And lose their whiteness  
In a carelessness of leaves;



And pine trees etch themselves  
Exquisitely  
In russet greens upon the powder of the  
clouds.

## SONG FOR THE PROLOGUE

SHALL you forget what beauty is  
Who love no other thing?  
Forget such simple miracles  
As song . . . and Spring?

Oh! can a flame dream as it dies  
And smoulders to its star,  
Going, an unseen ghost, through mist  
Where fireflies are . . . ?

## CIRCE

HERE on the cliff, remembering thy words,  
I watch thy ships go out like snowy birds . . .  
Their sails thou hast unfurled, and in the gold  
Of dazzling sunlight they are pure . . . and  
bold!

How splendidly, unfearingly, high-bowed,  
Thy fleet glides, flinging white foam wings!  
How proud,  
Ulysses, are thy little boats that break  
The blue Ægean in a silver wake . . .

The waves behind thee are but lapping curls  
Subsiding . . . and a single sea gull whirls  
Over the stillness with a tiresome cry—  
A dwindling, futile cadence from the sky . . .

A breath comes slowly from the sea below,  
Lifeless and warm; my garments do not blow  
[85]

Or move a fold about my listless hand;  
No further than my lips my hair is fanned . . .

I think there is a song some poor king weaves  
Where birds flash in and out among the leaves,  
Throbbing behind me in the trees above—  
Some poor proud king, enchanted and in love!

But I forget if there are unfreed kings  
Unhappy in my grove—imprisoned things;  
I have forgot what witchery is wrought  
To precious heroes that my wand hath caught.

I have forgot my palace in the grove,  
My women and the tapestries they wove  
Of silken cloths and textiles finely spun  
To fitly dress the daughter of the sun . . .

I have forgot the treasures that evince  
The serfdom of some supplicating prince;  
I can remember nothing but thy words,  
Watching thy ships go out like snowy  
birds . . .

And those are clearer than the seagull's wails,  
And purer than thy gleaming stainless sails

That vanish at the long horizon line,  
Taking thy men . . . and nothing that is  
mine!

Here, on the cliff's sharp edge, I do not care  
If thou hast found me in the sunlight glare  
Watching, dumbly, motionless to see  
The last small sail that is the end of thee . . .

## SUCCESS

ACROSS the quite smooth satin lawn,  
Wearing the diamonds of dawn  
Upon his flame-burned breast and wings,  
A careful robin comes and sings  
In four short notes the music that is  
his . . .

Though he is very small and still,  
Hearing him sing with so much skill,  
I cannot help but let him see  
That somehow he appears to me  
Far more impressive than the peacock is!

## HAPPINESS

A LEAF lies on the pathway stone,  
A sun-touched single leaf, unblown,  
And shadows of the bending trees  
Cover its gold by slow degrees . . .

“The lace of elms will disappear,”  
I tell a thoughtless bluebird, near,  
Who sits upon a curved low bough  
Where elms are cloudy-copper now.

He skims the sky and leaves the tree  
And drops three silver notes to me,  
And down the wind I hear him chime  
An unchanged song of Summertime!

## WOOD SILENCE

STEPPING into the closing forest, here,  
A sudden silence seemed to seize each bird,  
As I stopped breathlessly to overhear  
The secret of a last excited word . . .



## **BOUQUET**

**INTO a little waif's frail reaching hands  
I put a jonquil, just about to die,  
That made her eyes turn misted violets  
And changed her mouth into a butterfly.**

## **BALM**

**If you know pain, if you know sorrow,  
Go to a wood where May be-stirs her wings,  
Hold out the red cup of your heart  
And catch the gold notes that a robin flings!**

## BLACK AND SILVER

THE moon strikes silver in the flung sea-spray  
Into a glistening arabesque array  
Of jewels scattered where a dark tree stands  
As waves break, flashing, on the looming  
sands . . .

## FANCY

THE star-lace lilac, lavender and sweet,  
Clouds in the thick green clustered leaves  
again—

As every other spring—down every street  
A bush turns purple in the first May rain . . .!

## GLADIOLI

**THESE** swords that gleam in broken rows,  
Plunged upward through the earth's full  
veins,  
Drip still with scarlet blood although  
They have been washed by summer rains.

## WONDERS TO SEE

**DAY** goes by with a beautiful display  
Of glowing green and glistening array,  
And now, the nakedness of Night gleams pale  
As a star-point catches and tears her veil.

## ENVY

THE lilac bends and throws its leaves  
Where the lissom willow stirs  
And hangs her lovely head and grieves  
That no purple plumes are hers.

## RUMORS

Now Summer is a king grown old,  
Whose wealth diminishes, whose sway  
Over his land ebbs day by day . . .  
And soon, with pageantry of gold,  
A prince shall come to claim the realm . . .  
(All this is rumored in an elm.)



## THE SISTERS

SEPTEMBER gathers the purple grapes  
In thickly clustered shining shapes;  
October dances over the hill,  
Letting her golden goblet spill . . .

## THE CONFLAGRATION

Now the crow haunts the woodland maze  
And leaves are burning on the elms;  
Winds blowing sharply fan the blaze  
In flying flames through forest realms.

Old oaks and cedar trees take fire  
And jagged sumac embers glow;  
Pines are but singed and scorching higher,  
Willows are smoldering below . . .

So soon, the wood-rose ash will lie  
Brittle and strewn beneath the fern,  
While cricket Nero fiddles by  
Watching his Rome—the summer—burn.

## THE CLIFF

### I

THE sea pounds on the rocks—  
The great torn gaunt rocks,  
Tumbled and chiseled.  
Heavy and gray,  
The waves fall, shaking, turgid,—  
Breaking themselves into flying blizzards of  
foam;  
Crashing back  
On to the next ragged swell,  
And leaping crazily up  
Into showering clouds of green-gray mists;  
Sweeping over the rocks,  
Flooding, drowning,—  
Then retreating,  
Leaving the huge leaden shapes glistening

[51]

In black nakedness,  
Slimed and straggled with shining moss.

The winds tear in,  
Screaming, roaring;  
Over the gray they rush in a frenzy,—  
Blown out of time  
Across the knife of the horizon;  
Full of the whirl of unseen wings  
And thick with stinging arrows of salt . . .

Straight-browed, lofty,  
Above veils of green and rose mists,  
Looms the cliff.

## II

### INTERLUDE

. . . Vague memories afloat . . .  
Intangible mosaics,—  
Stars in a pool;  
White fingers and a rose;  
Bent trees whispering to the moon;  
A scarf tangled in the grass;  
A sigh . . . laughter . . .

[52]

### III

#### THE WOOD

There is a woodland, poised  
And peering, over the abyss,  
That is gilt beneath the sun,  
And at night purple and silver.  
White Narcissus haunts here,  
And Columbine is beloved of the leaves.  
And here riots a stream  
That is born of the diamond snows,  
And lilts down over the crags of dreams;  
By the old trees it runs,  
Singing the little song that the forest loves  
But cannot understand.  
On—on, over the laughing stones,  
Under the covetous fingers of the willow,  
And around the leaning oaks . . .

And in the deepest darkness of the cliff-wood  
Leans a tree  
That has no sisters in the world;  
And its dark drooped boughs  
Are like great arms

That are twisted in dusky mosses;  
Mosses that are starred with white orchids—  
Lovely waxen orchids—  
Flowers whiter than snow,  
Paler than the first glance of dawn at the sea,  
White as the lips of death . . . .

## NORTH SEA'

SONGS of far Spain ring in the northern sea;  
Of gold shores where the green palms fringe  
a sky

Sharper with blue than billows' blue can be,  
Where clouds like heaping yellow roses lie . . .

Stories of India are in the sound  
These waves make, dashing on this distant  
rock;  
Of gorgeous leopards leaping to the ground  
And wailing turmoil of a parrot flock . . . .

## A SUNSET

A GORGEOUS pageant ends the splendid day;  
Look to the flaming West; a copper glare  
Is roaring, brazen,—burning clouds that there  
Are scarlet flags the streaming breezes fray;  
Down on the faint-stirred water of the bay  
The sky has splashed a tumult of pastels  
That melt and shade in slowly moving spells,  
As changing lights on fluted glass would play.

Across upon the undulating land  
Calm shadows of the softened colors throw  
Gray-purples, rose, and magic blue that shade  
And deepen where the darkened valleys stand;  
High-pinnaced a window's orange glow  
Is starred before the sun's last banners fade.



## CHANSON CHINOISE

THE bridge's lanterns mark the stream  
With crimson dagger scars,  
And luminous as stars  
The falling almond petals gleam . . .

The straight deep orchard ways are  
strewn  
With over-ripened pears . . .  
The dark pagoda wears  
For diadem the circle moon.

Slow winds silver a little knoll  
Where willow trees are bowed;  
And curling, golden, loud,  
Rise lyrics of an oriole.

You do not heed the wonder-call  
To garden realms he weaves,  
But you shall see the leaves  
Whirl down behind the courtyard  
wall . . . .

## SHADOW HOUR

THERE is so strange a stillness as you lie  
Hushed in the darkness . . . and the lilies  
    near,  
Catching the moonlight in their curving hands,  
Diffuse its pallor on your half-turned  
    face . . .

There is no lift air to move their scent.  
They cloud about the casement . . . motion-  
    less . . .

And breathless as the lilies and the night,  
Loving your shadowed peacefulness—am  
    I . . .

## PREMONITION

THE snow is leaving the hills;  
They are brown,  
And shadowed with the gray lace of win-  
ter trees  
Against the sky where quick clouds  
Are uncovering blue.  
A moist breath of wind  
Wavers a leaf away—  
It is the last dead thing . . .  
I look far, into the blue distances . . . .

## PORTENT

So dark the hour was, and the sky so gray  
It almost seemed that there could never be  
Again a green and blue and golden day  
When wind would curl the silver from the sea.

The birds went out in silent wheeling flocks . . .  
We watched the wonder on the water wrought  
By curtain mist; and by the far blurred rocks  
We saw a gray ship that the calm had caught.

Only a high great crow that flapped its wings  
Startled the stillness of the clouded air  
And vanished . . . And we spoke of trifling  
things

To break a silence that we could not bear.

My fingers moved and barely touched your  
hand,

. [60]

And yet we did not stir to end the spell,  
For something that we could not understand  
Tolled in a dolorous and distant bell . . . .

## APRIL EARTH

Now when I think of it, of course, I smile,—  
You, and the mystery I thought you were;  
The deep perplexity is now a blur  
In things forgotten for a long, long while . . .

But I remember walking to your house  
A night in spring, and odor of the ground  
In April dampness rising all around,  
And the magnolias breaking on their boughs;

I see your doorway and the lilacs bare  
About the steps gray in a flood of light  
Slanting across the lawn into the night,  
And you half hidden in a shadow there . . .

I smile now, thinking . . . I am twenty-  
two . . .

Oh what we did not know and what we knew!

## MARGOT

### I

DEAR ONE, I cannot tell you in a word  
How sweet I think you are, for you are gone;  
Gone like a lovely song that I have heard,  
But never learned, from new-leaved woods at  
dawn . . .

I think of fluting from a distant hill  
Blown in the spring by some light shepherd  
boy,

Startling the winds and making birds be still;  
And in my soul awakes a sudden joy,—  
A joy that rising to my lips must die  
With such pain as the night feels when afar  
Day's silver fingers slip along the sky,  
And tremble up to take a fainting star.

You are the strange sweet music of my  
days,

And I am troubled by your strange sweet  
ways . . . .

## II

I fancy you, so slenderly supine,  
Among the light long grasses of a hill,  
Where, like a wind-blown flower you recline—  
Fallen to dreams . . . so wistfully . . . and  
still . . .

And when the tired wind creeps into a tree,  
It does not tremble much, but with a sigh  
Quivering, hushed, listens wonderingly . . .  
And passing clouds seem loth to leave the sky;  
But hover, shifting,—piled against the blue,  
Making the flood of eager sunlight flow,  
Sudden and shadowed, changing over you  
Like moods, or music that is fast and slow . . .

All these, perplexed, half doubting you  
are real—

But for the dreams your vivid eyes reveal.



### III

I love the blessed sweetness that is peace;  
The stillness infinite of stars remote,  
Casting their wan long shadows on the seas;  
The quiet strangeness of the mists afloat—  
Trailing their veils beneath the trees low-  
    drooped,  
Listening to whispers of the dying hour;  
The straight tall poplars, and the willow  
    stooped,  
Heavy with dreams; the silence of a flower . . .  
All ways of peace I love, all beauty still;  
And you! Ah you,—how strange it is, my  
    dear!  
For ardent as the wind you are in will,  
And heedless as the wind you leave me here,—  
    Where I—a calm pool mirroring the sky,  
    Forget I love the stars as you sweep by!

## A LITTLE SONG

I know that it is autumn  
Not that the sumacs glow  
Or that the robin makes his song  
A little low . . .

I see the leaves grow weary  
Of clinging to the bough  
And sigh and give the wind his way,  
But that's not how . . .

I tell that it is autumn  
Not from a frosty hill;  
I feel it in a heartache  
That I cannot kill.

## DEPARTURE

OH, when the lit green willow sways  
Its feathery leaves that slowly move  
In timid winds of April days,—  
Then give its loveliness your love!

And when, on Spring's first quiet night,  
You see the high stars blossoming  
Like great cool flowers in a ring,—  
For me behold them with delight.

When shadows steal the day's last gold  
Left lying on the highest hill,  
And it is dusk . . . and it is still,  
And some bird's sorrowing is told;

In life's rich fullness, for a while,  
Will you be silent and recall  
Those other dreams I had . . . and smile,  
Remembering how I loved them all . . . ?

[67]

## TO A BLOSSOMING DOGWOOD

**TREE!** Down beneath the earth where you  
have slept

Last winter's sleep and all the other years',  
Is there a sacristy where God has kept  
Life of all laughter and of all old tears?  
As you blow sunward on this brilliant day,  
Is it not something of all time that warms  
My heart with litanies I cannot say  
And lures a swallow-lover to your arms?  
What could you whisper if the falling rain  
Brought you a word for every lifted leaf?  
I know of rooms where every word is pain . . .  
And every touch is grief consoling grief . . .  
Here, in your maze of slender roots, I lie,  
Woven by threads of sunlight to the ground,  
And as you laugh and as you stir and sigh  
I read the parable of either sound . . .

[68]

**O Heavenly Cloud hiding heaven from me,  
Let wind shake down the loveliness you bear;  
Cover the poem I make and cover me . . .  
For beauty, and for nothing else, I care!**

## DRYAD

I FOUND her where a birch bent down,  
Dipping its silver in a brook;  
She spread her hair like golden wings  
And leaned far out to look.

She touched a lily with her lips  
And pressed the cool grass with her breast  
While music fell into the leaves  
From some low linnet's nest.

I saw her shadow fall and frighten  
Darting little minnow flocks  
And shake upon the drifting reeds  
That clung around the rocks.

She was of sun and mist and rose,  
And moved with waywardness of  
breeze . . .

Ah, when I stirred to touch her head  
A laugh broke from the trees!

[70]

## THE RAIN

To-DAY I make a song for rain . . .  
For rain is like a woof of gems,  
Is like a fringe of melting pearls  
Hung from the sky's gray hems.

The soft rain falteringly sighs  
Benevolence upon the roofs  
That point up to my window square  
A score of cruel proofs . . .

The town has been so sharp with sun  
For weeks I have not dared look out  
And learn too certainly how things  
Grow obdurate in drought.

But now a wind leans from a cloud  
And blows pearl-aprons on the pane  
To cloak realities and roofs . . .  
Oh Blessedness of rain!

[71]

## THE DREAM PEDDLER

**THERE** is a peddler on our hill  
Who offers ware stores never will . . .  
And though ours is a busy town  
Its people find the time to frown . . .

Past days, this peddler dreamed and sang,  
But we rushed by where store-bells rang,  
And only children stared and stopped,  
Or folk who stooped for things they  
dropped . . .

He sang a splendid Summer out,  
But since the Autumn stands about  
As still as trees that line the street  
Where birds have followed Summer heat.

For no one buys a blessed thing;  
The stuff he sells is tarnishing—  
Much as the grass that disappears  
Under his feet as Winter nears.



And now, I guess, he would not sing  
For love or gold or for a king—  
Since he has learned how people care  
Not greatly for his unreal ware . . .

He leans with old light in his eyes  
The color of the first Fall skies,  
And waits . . . as willows wait for  
Spring . . .  
And dares not dream of—anything . . .

## AN OLD CHAPEL-YARD

IN benediction and in prayer  
Arms of the ancient trees are spread  
Above this worn and quiet square  
Of hidden and undreaming dead . . .

These are the humble and the great  
Of past pathetic times who lie  
With meager marks on crumbled slate  
Telling the day they had to die.

“Here lieth buried Daniel Stone,  
Deceased in Sixteen Eighty Six . . .”  
There, Lady Anne,—so long alone.  
How warm June sunlight makes the  
bricks . . .!

But grief was real when they were laid  
To endless silence some lost year,

[74]

Beside the new church in the shade  
Of elms but newly planted here.

And when its song was not so old  
I think the church-bell must have tolled:  
"Too many live . . . and love . . . and  
go . . ."

While chimes like tears have fallen  
slow . . . .

## NEW ENGLAND

I KNOW an old New England town  
Where trees are thick and roofs are  
brown,

And where a river winds away,  
Turning the mirrored green to gray . . .

The houses and the roads are friends  
With every elm and oak that bends  
Close to old chimneys or high gates  
Guarding mild gardens and estates.

And in the fields there is no toil,  
For only lovers of the soil  
Open its mellowness to run  
With corn and wheat and summer sun . . .

I know a fenced and flowered hill  
Where people stay and yet are still  
After the valley windows light  
To call New England home at night.

[76]

## SYMBOLS

OVER the tall white picket fence  
That keeps the garden all for me  
The rose vine's flowering is dense  
And deeper red than blood can be.

I stood, this morning, looking down,  
And from my window saw a line  
Of men pass by in dusty brown  
Beyond the crimson of the vine . . .

The vine is heavier to-day  
And redder from a fresh light rain,  
But now I think I will not say  
That roses are like blood, again.

## THEY PASS

OH I have seen the valiant ones go by—  
Eyes to the sun—and heard the praise of men  
Filling the day for deeds that will not die;  
And I have stood apart and wondered, then.

It must be right, or blind hearts would not leap  
With such instinctive joy because they go  
To things that make men proud and women  
weep;  
They are the very life of truth, I know.

And all I wonder is,—how do they wake  
To so much grandeur who were meek so  
long—  
When I, who from the first loved living's ache,  
Have nothing else to offer but a song . . . .?

## FOURTEENTH STREET

WE used to walk along the street and stop  
Always before the little jewelry shop  
That had the big gold ring above the door . . .  
We'd stop and gaze into the window there . . .

I liked a funny little, round, gilt clock  
With figures standing on a marble block  
And thin gold hands that stood at half-past  
four . . .

He wanted to buy it but he didn't dare;

It cost too much for him . . . I wouldn't  
hear . . .

But he said, "Pretty soon, you'll have it dear."  
And in the shiny glass our eyes would meet,  
And then we'd laugh and walk along some  
more . . .

He went to France; "I'll be back soon," he  
said,  
But he never will . . . now—God!—he's  
dead . . .  
Last night I went alone down Fourteenth  
Street,  
And the clock still said that it was half-past  
four!



## TO A GIRL WAITING . . .

So small, so still, so pitifully slim!  
What stories I can guess, watching you there,  
A shadow symbol in the shoddy square  
Where lights are dull and silhouettes are dim.  
Your head held so,—your hat's transparent  
brim

Sketches a halo in the street lamp's flare . . .  
This incidental irony is rare!  
And my compassion is perhaps a whim.

But no . . . I shall remember how you sat  
Wistfully patient and the way you seemed  
A flower wilted in the humid night.  
I shall be troubled to recall how bright  
The heavy softness of your soft hair gleamed  
Under that odd gold circle of your hat.

## **BELIEF**

**I CANNOT see the spring come back,  
After the ice-bound winter goes,  
With songs along the woodland track  
And where an orchard blows;**

**Or see old meadows turn again  
From futile months and barren brown  
To shimmer when the young green grain  
Weaves them a shadow-gown;**

**I cannot watch May-beauty spread  
To vines inflamed and roses flushed,—  
And think that when a man is dead  
He lies forever hushed . . .**

## PEACE

THERE is a place where poplars in a row  
Upon a hill are fingering the sky,  
Touching with silver, as the wind goes by,  
The deep dusk sapphire and the clouds like  
snow . . .

And in the wind that wavers farther on,  
Across the wood to cottages aglow  
With quiet evening fires and lamps turned  
low,  
Linger the fragile lilts where larks have gone.

In peace and the serenity it brings  
The plans are casual that men work upon,  
And as the clock strikes chimes from dawn to  
dawn  
Houses and hours are little-changing things.

The poplars touch the stars upon a hill;  
Meadows are sweet with larks at end of day;  
And windows glow, and thankful humans  
    pray . . .  
There is a place where men lie very still . . .

## SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON

THE late sun slanting under trees  
Creeps—tender gold—across the lawn,  
Where soft still shadows smooth the  
green,

To dream until the light is gone.

Slow wind is floating from the south;  
With wavered breath sighs what it knows  
Of lost June's promises and dreams,  
And moves the mid-September rose.

The locust's fiber-drone complains;  
The reedy wave-song from the leaves  
Floods out and drifts along the air;  
And, querulous, the high crow grieves.

Far hills that shape a careless line  
Against the sky, supine, beneath  
Last love of summer winds, take on  
The pompous majesty of death.

## **POURQUOIS?**

**WHY** do your eyes speak troubled things?  
I think of a stillness that is  
When the last autumn wind dies . . .  
And about your lips there is a certain music—  
Wavering as the wings of a slow bird,  
Disturbing as shadows . . .

## THE FLORENTINE LADY

BRING me the mirror Benvenuto made  
Of gold and amethyst and polished jade,  
And I will dress my hair so that my face  
Fits like a picture in the mirror's space.

Last night he bragged of Venice when he  
came.

Once, after Naples, it was much the  
same . . .

I know his ways . . . so well . . . give me  
the glass,

And I will change my hair and let it pass.

## IN MUSIC

LONG thin notes of a violin  
Remind me of your hand—  
The texture of a satin fold,  
Strange as a shadow strand . . .

Reticent flutes bring me this thought  
With every halting note,—  
How hesitantly . . . delicately  
Life lilts in your throat . . .



## FUGUE

(*To S.*)

LADY, quaint in exotic brocades,  
You come here through the youth of each  
century;  
Or how could your eyes laugh so  
When your lips are still?  
And the way you lift your hands—  
They are conscious of a mischief-magic;  
I have seen them, lying half-hidden in folds of  
silk,  
Ripple to sudden laughter . . .

You bring vague redolence of lavender and  
old rose-leaves,  
And sometimes of a perfume we have lost,—  
Essence of a rare Bythinian oil, or  
Of some spice-seed crushed to incense  
In Asian groves for a new princess.

[89]

You have laughed across fragments of my  
many dreams;  
Dreams that were but winged minutes of old  
hours,—  
Smiling mockery in your eyes . . .  
And I have wished to know older dreams.

I found you, once, in a song of Tintoretto's  
brush,—  
"A Lady Dressed as a Queen;"  
Did you tell him to make you immortal,  
And laugh while he painted?

Pauline of Toulouse—  
Do you remember?  
When she showed her beauty to the throng,  
They were covetous of it;  
But there was only one lover there . . .

Your sleek, satin-pointed feet,  
I fancy, have pattered the grass lawns of  
Versailles,  
To the marble edge of a fountain,  
Where you looked  
And met eager eyes with laughing ones.

O Lady,  
I would bring you to an old French garden,  
And place you so soft, in apricot and gold  
    brocades,  
Upon an ivied bench;  
And I would kneel to you  
And make you gifts I had searched the world  
    to find;  
They would be trinkets you had loved  
Those other years;  
Amulets of jade,  
And queer little satsuma spice-jars,  
Textiles from India,  
Chased mirrors from Florence,  
And Venetian rings to be vivid on your wan  
    fingers,  
Painted fans, and tiny ivories  
Carved in fourteenth century France . . .  
I would give them to you slowly,  
So each of your smiles might glow  
Like a single jewel.

## SONG OF OMENS

O Love! petals are falling from the bloom  
That clouds the garden and the orchard ways;  
Beyond our window through the woven gloom  
They gleam, silver as snow, silent as haze!

Petals have wilted from the cherry boughs . . .  
The glow is dwindling in the dogwood tree . . .  
Death of the Spring hovers around our  
house . . .

O Love! remember . . . and return to me . . .

## FIRST FLOWERS

OH the snow-white pale and the red stained  
silk

Of the still tall tulip tree!  
And the star magnolia whiter than milk—  
Are magically fair to me!

But through the lace of the fragile birch—  
Like silver satin frost—  
A blackbird sings from a slender perch  
Of a dream that I have lost!

## THE SECRET

A LINNET came to my window ledge  
To sing a song of the hawthorne hedge,  
And I saw wind in the pale frail flowers  
Driving them down in feathery showers;  
And watched the sunlight changing their  
snow  
On the faint green grass to a golden  
glow . . .  
And so I know why the linnet grieves,  
Flashing back to familiar eaves . . .  
For to see the hawthorne turned to gold  
Is too much beauty for one to behold!

## CITY APRIL

I HAVE not seen a tree take on  
The mist of April green,  
Or heard a thrush at any dawn  
To guess what it could mean . . .

And yet, that it is spring I know,  
For everybody stops  
To wonder at the jonquil glow  
In all the flower shops.

## DEATH OF THE ROSES

SING low, sing low, O mournful wind!  
For radiant June has fled;  
Wake not the bird or leaves unbind—  
The sun-born rose is dead!

Gone is the glow from each curled leaf,  
And drooped each heavy head.  
Bid Dawn, O Night, to weep in grief—  
The moon-cooled rose is dead!



## THE MARVEL

UP on the hill where trees were bare  
I saw her go the first spring dawn;  
The thrushes came while she was there  
And sang when she had gone.

I looked at noon, and lo! a light  
Had crept into the apple row. . .  
"The hill," I said, "will soon be white  
With April apple snow."

So I was sure that I had learned  
Why thrushes sang where she went by—  
Yet on the day that she returned  
The leaves began to die. . . .

## MAGIC

THREE seagulls crossed on the space of sky  
That is all my window frames for me,  
And flashed like silver, fluttering by,  
From the far, wide, foam-blown sea;

I only glimpsed them—white as they flew,  
And the sky was grayer than lead;  
But I cared little, for I saw the blue  
Of the distant sea instead.

## ECSTASY

Oh, I am kindred to the new green fields  
And with the ecstasy that young grain yields,  
Nurtured by April's gentleness . . . I seek  
The sun taking from light of dawn new breath  
That it may give all living life . . . I speak  
In inspiration of the rain . . . Oh, death  
May come to silence me—touch out my star—  
When I forget to be as these things are!

## AN HOUR

UPON the surface of the silver stream  
There are no shadows as I wait and dream,  
No swift reflection of a bird  
Or clouds blown out across blue . . .  
Only the iris reeds are stirred,  
Weaving the hush about my thoughts of  
you. . . .

## PIZZICATO

My Margot, toward your casement hinge  
The leaning moonflowers shake,  
Touching the filmy curtain fringe . . .  
You do not wake.

The dew has drenched the white swan's wing  
And he has come ashore . . .  
The new moon hangs a golden string  
Beyond your door.

The fountain whispers as it falls  
Between the marble fingers  
Of white Narcissus near the walls  
Where Echo lingers.

Oh, I will pull the moon's thin thread  
And shake down stars in showers  
For winds to heap upon your bed  
Like golden flowers!

[101]

## ENDED STORY

IN days to come when you will think of me,  
Remembering our story without grief,  
Cool-hearted as you turn some faded leaf,—  
Oh, be as kind as peace will let you be!  
And moments that return too poignantly  
Forget as you forgot the glad belief  
In things you held that period so brief  
When all you knew of love was ecstasy . . .

Let such a gentle thought as how we smiled  
Together watching children in the street  
Soften your eyes . . . or think of long hours  
whiled

Reading and silent in a dear retreat . . .  
Find these old flowers—if you dare to look—  
Pressed in the pages of our long-closed book.

## LOST THINGS

RETURN! . . . there were no leaves here when

I went;

Then it was desolate and boughs were gray,  
Shivering in each gust, and aged and bent,  
For in the last March wind I went away . . .

Now I am home again from fabled places,  
And memory is like a mirror blurred  
With broken gestures and unnumbered  
faces . . .

And echoes of a laugh, a phrase, a word . . .

A faded summer that I did not see  
In glory of its youth still lingers here,  
Wraith-like upon the hills, and in a tree  
The tired winds sigh that autumn-time is near.

[108]

**There were no leaves shaped when I left to  
learn**

**New ways of living on the crowded coast;  
And now the red leaves fly . . . and I return,  
Haunted by Summer and another ghost. . .**



## WISTFULNESS

FROM the great distances  
Sings the wind . . .  
And the trees' lost leaves  
Are whirled upon the hills.

There are old things,  
Unresting, about my heart—  
Fluttering . . .  
As the leaves are whirled on the hills.

## **THE FISHERMAN**

**TIME** drags his great gray net along,  
Snaring the ended years that fly . . .  
Dragging his old, old net;  
And only the stars slip by.

## PANDORA

AMONG long shadows that Olympian leaves  
Paint across sunlight in the sacred groves,  
Gleaming like marble through the foliage  
    sheaves,  
Snowier than a cloud, Pandora moves . . .

Timidly, hesitantly, half afraid  
At each short rustling of a lifted leaf,  
And poised in mute bewilderment, dismayed  
To hear a soaring oriole lilt brief.

The sun is broken by the ways of trees,  
Wavering to work a miracle where  
It weaves a wonderment of filigrees,  
Flashing a halo from her lighted hair.

Her hand, uplifted from her side to brush—  
And yet not touching—a columbine shower,

[107]

Is such a thing that a high hermit thrush  
Fashions a lyric for a new-shaped flower.

His crystal music falling to an end,  
The red anemones wound in the grass  
Quiver to wind or song, shiver and bend,  
But at Pandora's lips no shadows pass . . .

She goes unconscious of the magic brought  
By her own beauty to a paradise,  
Goes unawakened to the wonder wrought,  
With neither awe nor wisdom in her eyes!

And by her side walks lame Illustrious,  
A demi-god and half an artisan,  
Who, at the word of the all-careful Zeus,  
Fashioned Pandora from the earth for man.

"This is thy world, this thy eternal place,"  
He tells her now, "to live in the gods' schemes.  
Thou art the mother of an earthly race  
That shall elaborate the heavens' dreams.

"Each god and all the goddesses endowed  
Thee with an attribute thou shalt display

To waken wonder in man, to keep him proud  
Of deeds, Pandora, and to make him pray.

"Go to him now; swift-footed Mercury  
Will sweep thee in a flash of rainbow light  
To set thee at its end where man will be  
And welcome thee into the Earth's delight.

"Go . . . take thy beauty and the treasure  
trove

The gods have given thee of godly things;  
Go make the world more heavenly with love;  
Fleeter than the wild swans' are Mercury's  
wings . . ."

Pandora moves where eglantine is blurred;  
Her white side brushes soft snow from its  
bloom

Down in a cloud, and the cold fragrance  
stirred

Floats on a dewy breath through the green  
gloom.

The lightning of a red fox streaking by  
Behind a low-bent birch frightens her now,

[109]

Or berries dropping, or the curlew's cry,  
Or sudden murmur where the aspens bow.

Apart, Illustrious stands watching her  
And waits to hear the first word she will speak,  
To see the soft curves of her lips astir  
Bring changing color to her tender cheek.

But she has made no syllable of sound;  
She is as still as wood-things are except  
In motion . . . no slight smile her lips have  
found  
Takes from her eyes a dream-shade they have  
kept . . .

She scarcely seems to see Illustrious  
Or understand his meaning when he talks;  
Like one forgetting to be curious  
Of hidden miracles Pandora walks . . .

"Pandora!" cries Illustrious at last,  
"Dost thou see anything . . . or art thou  
blind?  
Or unaware still of the voice thou hast? . . .  
For Zeus, I know, hath given thee a mind.

[110]

"Dost thou not wonder at the things near thee  
Here, on Olympus, in the gods' own place?  
Among such miracles how can it be  
Thy voice is mute and in thy face no trace

"Of awe and reverence hath been revealed?  
Is thy strange silence something of a sign  
That cunningly Minerva keeps concealed  
A secret in the beauty that is thine?

"Why art thou dumb? Thy silence is a wrong,  
For all the near birds sang, seeing thee born,  
With skill and fervor that were new to song  
And to the wonder of the misted morn . . .

"Dropping their frail full notes, and where  
they fell,  
Blown on a breath of wind or echoing  
Along the ground, tinkled the blue hare-bell  
And woke forget-me-nots' remembering.

"This is an hour of holiness, of peace,  
A moment that the gods designed in dreams;  
And here profusely perfect, to appease  
A soul seeking the truth, are beauty's themes;

[111]

"The ground where golden tapestry and lace  
Of shaking leaves and shadow light is lain  
On grasses gleaming with a dewy trace  
Where dawn spun wonder of a jeweled skein;

"The rose is heavy on a tangled vine,  
Shedding its glory in a crimson shower,  
And there a butterfly without design,  
Dipping its wings, is like a falling flower . . .

"The thickness of the fruit trees overhead  
Is flushing faintly where the pendant pears  
In clusters hang, bending the boughs, and red  
Glowes now amid the green the apple wears.

"A gentle wind swept from the sloping fields  
Aging in sun upon Olympus' side  
Comes keen with sweetness that the clover  
yields  
From purple plots that are embroidered wide.

"The sky is like a great unswelling sea . . .  
Ah, that alone would seem enough to wake



More wonder and desire for words in thee,  
Pandora, than thy lips might learn to make!"

She stands like a tall flower among the ferns,  
Her head bent and her cloud of hair unblow-  
ing;

Hearing Illustrious' complaints, she turns  
Slowly, as though again from the earth just  
glowing . . .

Bright birds dart down and crowded butter-  
flies

Flash by in brilliance on the green-gold  
air . . .

There is confusion in Pandora's eyes  
And at her mouth . . . and there are tremors  
there . . .

At last her lips are shaping to a word;  
A little breeze among the leaves says "hush!"  
And through the tenseness, echoing, is heard  
The throbbing music of a distant thrush;

No other sound . . . the wood anticipates  
The first expression of a loveliness

New to behold . . . Illustrious awaits  
Pandora's answer that he cannot guess.

Her face as fragile as a carven mask  
Of tinted marble, now seems quite as still . . .  
And then: "What is thy wish?" her first words  
ask;  
"Hast thou some hope that I cannot fulfill?"

Her lips move slowly and their motion wakes  
The quiet color in her cheeks to flow;  
She seems to kiss each syllable she makes  
Before her mouth will let their music go.

Illustrious is breathless as she speaks,  
Watching as though he were an earthly lover,  
Tensely and dark . . . and while his whole  
soul seeks  
To catch the sounds that at her curved lips  
hover.

But no life flashes in Pandora's eyes;  
They are like unblown pools . . . and now she  
turns

In languid silence . . . and the forest  
sighs . . .

Her snow limbs brush along 'the shaken  
ferns . . .

"Pandora, is that all? Pandora, stay!  
And tell me there are truths within thy being  
Too deep a mystery for thee to say  
Born of the beauty thou art newly seeing!"

Fear flaming through his voice, surprise, de-  
spair,

The artisan's dark countenance grows white.  
Pandora bends her head and all her hair  
Falls in a dazzling flood of shattered light . . .

Touching her shoulder when a tendril sways,  
A silken willow leans as if to merge  
Her head's gold cloud among its silver  
sprays . . .

She is a dryad at the thicket verge.

Upon the lower leaves against her side  
The clusters of a laden bush have bled,

And berries cling, seeming as though they  
tried  
To press her body with their burning red . . .

Beyond an opening of the crowded trees,  
Streaming their feathers through the sheaves  
of grass,  
Within the sacred grove Pandora sees  
The milk-white peacocks indolently pass . . .

“Art thou unmoved by such a sight as that,—  
To see the peacock spread a paint-splashed  
fan?  
Ah, what a miracle to wonder at!  
One to disturb thee if a beauty can.

“Oh, I have wrought thee from the unshaped  
clay;  
By dictum of the gods, such was my duty;  
But gods, Pandora, will not hear thee pray  
If in thy soul there is no prayer to beauty!”

She lifts a hand and with her finger-tips  
Trembles a spray of blood-red berries hung

Close to her face . . . she feels them with her  
lips . . .

The leaves laugh softly where the spray had  
clung.

"Yes, touch the surfaces of satin grapes  
And hold the scarlet wild fruit to thy mouth;  
Thrill at the texture of their polished shapes,  
Inflamed with color of a burning south.

"What of the music dripping from the boughs,  
Fashioned by larks and linnets who rejoice  
And pour such poetry as dreams arouse  
Into the soaring of a silver voice?

"Oh, lovely thing! How did the gods forget  
To light a flame for beauty when they sent  
Their rarest gifts to thee? Why have they let  
Life quicken thee without life's true intent?

"Pandora, wake!" Illustrious implores.  
The word Pandora echoes all around  
And drifts its music through the woodland  
doors

To die in flowers on a meadow ground . . .

[117]

Oh, Woman, fashioned for an earthly race,—  
How heavenly the gods have let her be!  
Making her form so passionate with grace,  
Clouding her spirit with a mystery!

“There is a thing that I would have thee seek  
High on Olympus, but the Olympian plan  
I dare not change . . . nor would I dare to  
    speak,  
Telling a god that thou wilt trouble man.

“But, oh, I fear, Pandora, that the storms  
Which Zeus keeps chained above the mountain  
    head  
Shall some day be released and that their  
    forms  
Raging, will fall to be an Earthly dread!

“All this I dare not say . . . But go to Earth  
Ignorant of beauty and distress may fall  
More direful than the rage of tempest-birth,  
For beauty is the source and end of all . . .”

A wind slants down along a cypress' ways,  
Bending the arches to the sunward stairs

Where light drops quickly in a broken blaze  
And floods Pandora while its glory flares.

Her hair lifts . . . falls . . . and tangles at  
her shoulder;

She is enveloped in a drifting veil;

The shafts of ebbing sunlight break and  
smolder,

Deepening a shadow where her throat is  
pale . . .

Illustrious goes to her side and takes

Her hand and looks into her quiet eyes;

"Now we shall search until a marvel wakes  
The sleeping flame that in thy soul must rise,

"Must rise and burn, making thee all alive,—  
Thou art not yet, though warmth is in thy  
hand;

But there is something that thy soul must  
strive

To sense in living and to understand.

"Behold a tree; how conscious of the gods  
Trees seem, raising their arms in open  
prayer . . .

Behold the flaunted leaves, yet how it nods  
Obeisance to Apollo in the air.

“Look up and see the color of his path;  
How fatuous to give that light a name!  
Blue is the miracle Apollo hath  
Forged out of heaven with his wheels of  
flame . . .”

A tree curves low to touch a verdant bank,  
With stark roots tangled and upstanding  
there . . .  
Pandora is unmoved, her gaze still blank;  
She does not listen and she does not care . . .

## II

Sharp-pointed reeds sway upward in the shade  
Spattered with sunshine filtered through the  
gloom;  
They catch the light and weave it where they  
wade  
Into a pool upon their jagged loom.

[120]



And now they part . . . a curl of wind ca-  
reens . . .

The gold is banished from the water's hue,  
And to its limpid space the bent tree leans,  
Cutting a ragged image on the blue.

The leafy marvel which Illustrious praised  
Reflects upon the color he has named  
Apollo's miracle; the pool is traced  
With all the beauty he has just declaimed.

But suddenly the magic of it dims,  
Loses its splendor as a star might fail . . .  
For in the pool Pandora's vivid limbs  
Flash as she steps . . . and all reflections  
pale.

The waters almost seem to shiver, taking  
The swift sharp picture, gleaming as it falls  
Across their smoothness . . . and the iris  
shaking

Deep lavender and yellow from their walls

Around the pool bend down as though to hold  
So exquisite an image in their frame . . .

[121]

Pandora sees . . . she stops . . . she leans  
    . . . the cold  
Blue kindles, mirroring her hair's long flame.

Nearer she stoops, one arm about the tree,  
One arm outstretched with fingers quivering;  
Turning away, Illustrious cannot see  
Her curious awe, her strange awakening.

But now a gleam has lit Pandora's eyes,  
Her lips are slightly parted and her throat  
Beats like the breast of bird that will not rise  
And will not soar or will not sing a note . . .

Her fingers, rigid on the tree trunk, tighten  
As she bends over eagerly to peer  
At this amazing thing . . . she sees it whiten  
And sees it move and watch her drawing near.

A tiny circle shimmers and expands,  
Spreading a ripple of the golden shine  
That lights the water from the longest strands  
Of her hair hung drooping like a heavy vine.

"Pandora, now the peacock is in flight  
Like a frayed rainbow where the woodland  
          verges

Into the radiance of a valley's light;  
Come watch it and awake!" Illustrious urges.

His voice is carried to Pandora's ears,  
Mingled with chorus of the forest choir,  
But neither music nor the voice she hears,  
Nor her own heart beat . . . or the wind go  
by her . . .

"Oh, come, Pandora, quick!" he calls again.  
"Bright Mercury approaches and his feet  
Shatter the glistening clouds to gleaming rain;  
He flies . . . and the wild swans are not so  
fleet!"

The thickets rustle and the reeds are stirred;  
Upon the water little chips are blown;  
Pandora's shadow is disturbed and blurred,—  
Only her pallor in the pool is shown. .

The clamor of the peacocks' dwindling cries  
Floats through the sacred groves, mournfully,  
clear;

Startled by storms of light where Mercury  
flies,  
The peacocks flutter in tumultuous fear . . .

Breaking the foaminess of clouds, he darts,  
And like a monstrous arrow from a bow  
Drops to the forest and the foliage parts  
Showering color on the two below.

Illustrious runs to the light he flings  
And cannot see Pandora for the glare . . .  
He watches the great span of the god's wings  
Folded to stillness with a flash and flare.

Then Mercury goes forward calling her,  
And now Illustrious discerns her giving  
Motionless worshiping as though she were  
A thing of stone and one no longer living.

"Pandora, what hast thou beheld or heard  
To hold thee in a trance of silence there?  
What shadow hath appeared or what sound  
stirred  
Thy passive spirit, making thee aware?  
[124]

"What is it? . . . tell; or art thou yet alive?  
So still! . . . Ah, can it be 'the gods have  
chilled

The warmth within thy heart that would not  
strive

To learn what heaven meant or what it willed?

"Her hair sways in the wind . . . she is not  
stone;

Her lips are quiet and her eyes are quelled;  
Her limbs as rigid as if they had grown  
Fast to the snarl of roots where she is held!"

She will not turn her head . . . but now she  
speaks;

Her words like broken bars of music start:

"Ah, Beauty! thou art what Illustrious seeks;  
I know thee now . . . and what a spell thou  
art!

"Thou art no disappearing shadow thrown  
By half-thoughts of the gods, swiftly erased,  
For thou hast stayed, looking on me alone  
Without one line of loveliness effaced!

[125]

"I will not leave thee . . . ever!" Silence drops.

Illustrious is stricken dumb; his hand  
Rises to half a gesture, wavers, stops . . .  
He steps, leading the god from where they stand.

Above her crouching form the two look down  
And their reflections on the pool are thrown,—  
The white wings of the messenger, the frown  
Of dark Illustrious, behind her own.

She is too rapt to notice them. Once more  
She speaks, and as she speaks fans out her hair:

"Now thou art even fairer than before . . .  
I will not go from thee. How could I bear

"To live where thou art not? Oh, Beauty,  
love

Was in the prayer I heard Illustrious say  
While my breath came . . . and what he whispered of

I understand from thee and so can pray."

[126]

With angry swiftness then Illustrious flashes  
His hand among the blood-red berries near;  
Tearing a spray he throws it where it splashes  
And breaks Pandora's image . . . In quick  
fear

She starts and quivers from her knees and  
stands,  
Her hair like sudden lightning sways and  
catches  
Among the low-swung boughs in brilliant  
strands . . .  
The pool is stained with scarlet berry-  
patches . . .

"That is thyself thou seest and do adore  
Within the waters' mirror! . . . Go, ah go  
With Mercury . . . I cannot help thee more!  
I made thee but the gods have marred thee  
so!"

The artisan in silence turns aside . . .  
"Pandora, come," the swift god urges her;

[127]

His wings grow arched and wonderfully  
wide . . .

Pandora hears and stares but does not stir.

"Pandora, go!" Illustrious commands.  
To make thy advent as thou art on Earth."  
But rigid as a hyacinth she stands,  
And more bewildered than she was at birth.

And when the water has begun to calm,  
Taking her slender shadow once again,  
She crouches forward and extends her  
palm . . .

Her hair shakes downward in a drifted  
rain. . .

She breaks the pool's brim with her finger-tips,  
The close reflection of her hand is banished;  
So seeing this a smile darts at her lips  
And from her eyes the reverence has vanished.

"Descend now, Mercury," Illustrious says,  
"And from the world bring man to find her  
here;

Let him first see her as she kneels and prays  
Where her own features in the pool appear."



Spreading his glistening wings with whirring  
thunder,  
The god soars from the ground as winds arise,  
Rending the thick-beamed forest roof asunder  
He calls and disappears . . . the chaos  
dies . . .

Still-browed, as though she be in revery,  
Anticipating him who is to bring  
Her to his home, Pandora sits in ecstasy  
Before her beauty in the azure ring.

Illustrious, beneath the gloom of trees,  
As ominous as any of the fates  
Gazes without a word for what he sees;  
Bird singing softens and the woodland  
waits . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Before Pandora has adored her face  
For longer than a butterfly would fan  
Over one flower, light from the open space  
Above glares down . . . the god returns with  
man.

Close to her kneeling figure Mercury springs.  
Dark haired, deep-shadow eyed and straight  
of limb

The earthly being is whom Mercury brings;  
Pandora turns her head to look at him . . .

And soon the dark one lifts his splendid eyes:  
"Oh, I have seen the dawn's thin arrows dart,  
Hastening Diana to desert the skies  
When great Apollo rent the clouds apart!

"And I have had a fleeting vision dream  
Of white-curved Venus flashing from the sea  
More marvelous than anything could seem!  
But both these beauties were less fair than she!

"Oh, white Pandora! finer than the gems  
That Venus flung around her when she rose!  
Oh, gold Pandora! brighter than the stems  
Of arrows glinting where the gun-god goes!"

"Take her," Illustrious says, "for she is thine."  
And man moves nearer to his cold desire . . .

[180]

"Pandora . . . come . . . it is the gods' design;

Obeys their wishes or provoke their ire."

Over her head he stretches out an arm;

She sinks below as if to kiss the water . . .

Sharply he seizes her in swift alarm;

Her lips brush vaguely where his hand has caught her . . .

Illustrious and Mercury watch the pair

Rise back against the darkness of the tree;—

One languorous and ravishingly fair,

And one impassioned to intensity . . .

"I shall not go . . ." Pandora's words float lightly.

"I will not leave this vision in the pool.

Beauty can never be revealed more brightly

Than I behold it here." Her voice is cool.

"Oh, no, Pandora! Come, thou lovely thing!"

"I shall not go . . . and never see myself,"

She says again, and stares into the spring,

Leaning to danger from the grassy shelf.

[181]

"But there are rivers in the world! the sea  
At times grows calm enough to draw the  
fronds

Of lilies clearer than the pool paints thee;  
And for thy mirrors are unnumbered ponds!

"Oh, come, and I will lead thee in a day  
Where thou shalt see each miracle I love,  
And linger where the gulls and lilies sway,  
Fusing their images with thine above . . .

"Thou shalt behold thy face framed in the stars  
On meadow pools and rivulets at night,  
And I shall worship it while limpid bars  
Of blue sky fade above thy head's gold light!

"Pandora, come . . . Prometheus hath given  
The heavens' fire to me, and I will forge  
A mirror burnished by its flame and driven  
With jewels of the sea-depth and the gorge!

"So shalt thou always see the miracle  
That is thyself; and so behold it clearer  
Than waters of a pool give back its spell;  
Thy beauty will be doubled in thy mir-  
ror . . ."

Pandora rises with reluctance, doubt  
Shows in her eyes sharper than in her voice:  
"If thou hast spoken truth I will go out . . ."  
Illustrious sighs . . . "Pandora, make thy  
choice."

"Yes . . . I will go . . ." She hesitates  
and stands  
For one more look, her body straight, her hair  
Upheld like wings upon her outstretched  
hands;  
She steps . . . the surface of the pool is  
bare . . .

Out of the forest Mercury leads the way;  
His great wings brush the crowded foliage  
back,  
And following, the earthly creatures sway,  
Touching and trembling, through the wood-  
land track.

Illustrious walks slowly, lingering after;  
He hears the music in the treetops soar

[138]

And sees the blowing reeds and hears their  
laughter  
As they lean where Pandora leaned be-  
fore . . .

Half to himself he speaks: "Is this a plan,  
O Zeus, is this the cunning of thine ire?  
Is this to be a punishment of man,  
Thwarting Prometheus who gave him  
fire . . .?"

Winds among the swaying branches sigh . . .  
The patterns of the sunlight grow more dark;  
There is a sorrow in the peacock's cry  
Waking an echo from the furthest lark . . .

Into the light drenching the sloping fields  
Pandora and her lover soon emerge . . .  
He holds her, faltering . . . and now she  
yields . . .  
Along the grass winds drive a silvery  
surge . . .

[184]

The tall god turns and points a wing like  
snow

Down to the distant land where rivers  
run . . .

A rainbow arc drops suddenly below,  
Shining with splendor in the blaze of sun.







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